

Compiled and written by the staff of the Republican Policy Committee—Larry E. Craig, Chairman

\$12 million per year to maintain the ELF system. This system may do more than waste money, however. The electromagnetic radiation from the antennas in Wisconsin may cause cancer. Some studies have been inconclusive, but more than 40 studies have shown a link. The citizens of Wisconsin do not want these large antennas, which serve no valid military purpose. The Feingold amendment would consequently terminate the program, and would spend the savings on the National Guard, which sorely needs additional funding. We urge our colleagues to support this sensible amendment.

Those opposing the amendment contended:

As long as the United States maintains a submarine force, it is going to need a way to get messages to its submarines when they are operating at high speeds and at great depths. Currently, the only such communications system the United States has is the ELF system. A new system could conceivably be built, but the cost would be much greater than the minimal \$12 million annual cost of maintaining the current system. Without the ELF system, our submarines would be forced to operate at or near the surface, and move at slower speeds, because otherwise it would be impossible to get messages to them should an immediate need arise. The value of a submarine is precisely its ability to avoid detection; if the United States' submarines were forced to operate at slow speeds close to the surface or on the surface, they would be much easier to detect. In essence, the Feingold amendment would force us to operate submarines like surface ships, and would thus totally destroy the value of having submarines. The vast majority of our colleagues understand the numerous strategic and conventional reasons why the United States should maintain a submarine fleet, and they are willing to vote for hundreds of millions of dollars to maintain one. We trust, therefore, that they will not neuter that fleet by killing the ELF program.

We believe that the main reason our colleagues have proposed this amendment is in response to the fears of the citizens of Wisconsin, who have been led to believe by some researchers that the electromagnetic waves from the ELF antennas cause cancer. After those concerns were first raised, though, the Navy began to study the issue. It hired an independent organization to conduct ongoing environmental monitoring near the antennas. Over the years, that monitoring has not found any adverse effect on animals, plants, or micro-organisms. Further, in 1996, the National Academy of Science (NAS) completed an exhaustive review of more than 500 studies spanning 17 years of research on the health effects of electromagnetic fields, and found no conclusive evidence that those fields cause cancer, reproductive or developmental abnormalities, or learning or behavioral problems. Scientists who are more interested in notoriety than valid science still like to scare people into thinking that the antennas pose a health risk, but the evidence simply does not exist. For our part, we are not willing to degrade the United States' military capabilities to alleviate unwarranted fears. We therefore strongly oppose the Feingold amendment.